

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 and 18-26 are pending in the present application. Claims 8-17 were previously withdrawn. Previously withdrawn Claims 8-11 are currently amended and claims 12-17 are canceled. Claims 18-26 have been added, and claim 1 has been amended herein. No new matter has been added. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims in view of the following remarks.

The specification has been amended to correct a spelling error. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1-7 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,559,584 to Miyaji et al. (hereafter referred to as “Miyaji”) in view of Japanese Patent No. 02-256256 A to Yoshida et al. (hereafter referred to as “Yoshida”). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Claim 1 recites “wherein the projection optics chamber is connected to a supply of gas only through the one or more vacuum valves.” The disclosure by Miyaji does not teach or suggest a lithography system wherein the projection optics chamber is connected to the gas supply only through one or more vacuum valves. Rather, according to Miyaji, the projection optics chamber is connected to a plurality of gas supply lines. For example, in Miyaji, see Figure 1, valves V2, V6, and V7 supply gas comprising nitrogen. In Miyaji, the valves V6 and V7 are connected to gas cell GS that discharges ionized nitrogen. For example, see column 6, lines 64-66 and column 7, lines 2-4. Similarly, valve V2 is connected to nitrogen source as described in column 5, lines 31-32. Hence, claim 1 is allowable over Miyaji.

Claims 2-7 depend from claim 1 and add further limitations. Claims 18-20 are newly added and depend from claim 1 and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that

these dependent claims are allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding new limitations.

Previously withdrawn claim 8 as currently amended depends on allowable claim 5. Hence, allowance of claim 5 results in allowance of claim 8 and its dependent claims 9-11.

Claims 21-26 are newly added claims. No new matter has been added.

Claim 21 is a new claim, and specifically recites “a projection optics chamber, wherein the projection optics chamber is connected to a supply of gas only through the mask chamber.” The disclosure of Miyaji does not teach or suggest this limitation. Hence independent claim 21 is allowable.

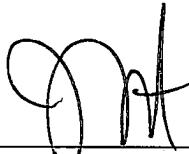
Claims 22-24 depend from claim 21 and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding new limitations.

Claim 25 is a new claim, and specifically recites “a projection optics chamber, wherein the projection optics chamber is connected to a supply of gas only through the mask chamber, and wherein the projection optics chamber is not connected to any other supply of gas.” The disclosure of Miyaji does not teach or suggest this limitation. Hence independent claim 25 is allowable.

Claim 26 is a new claim and depends from claim 25, and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that this dependent claim is allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding new limitations.

Applicants have made a diligent effort to place the claims in condition for allowance. However, should there remain unresolved issues that require adverse action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone Ira S. Matsil, Applicants' attorney, at 972-732-1001 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible. No fee is believed due in connection with this filing. However, should one be deemed due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge, or credit any overpayment, Deposit Account No. 50-1065.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date

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